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1. The current reform of secondary education in the USSR is a response to three problems: the fast-approaching universality of secondary education, the importance of labor productivity to economic growth, and dissatisfaction with the attitudes and behavior of Soviet youth, of which hooliganism is merely the extreme manifestation.

2. Until the 1950s the need for general labor and limited school facilities took most students out of school well before completion of the final (tenth) grade. For every 1000 students enrolled in first grade in 1930, for example, only 49 graduated ten years later. This relationship, in conjunction with the urgent need for persons with advanced training, made graduation from secondary school all but equivalent to entrance into a university or institute. The final unit of schooling, covering grades 8-10, was college preparatory in nature and was a major dividing line in career prospects, separating the future non-manuals from the manual. This situation, which was at its sharpest around 1950, has shifted radically during the past five years. Tenth-grade enrollment has grown by about 4.5 times and last year totaled 1.3 million. At the same time, the admission of freshmen to institutes and universities has increased only from 238,000 in 1950 to 287,000 in 1955. The disparity will become even more pronounced in the next five to ten years as universal education moves on from the present seventh-grade level to the tenth grade. Since there are no plans to increase higher educational enrollments correspondingly, the character of the secondary school is obviously obsolescent.

The Ten Reforms

3. The first reform the Soviet Union has undertaken is a revision of the curriculum in a polytechnical direction. The chief task of the secondary school has been redefined as the training, not of the engineers of the next five-year plan, but of the workers of this plan. Handwork has been introduced in grades 1-4, practical and experimental problems in school workshops and on school plots for grades 5-7, and advanced workshop and agricultural practice for grades 8-10. In order to accommodate these innovations, logic has been dropped and the share of a student's time (over the ten-year period) devoted to general education has fallen

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from 54 to 47 percent. In addition, apart from the new "labor" subject introduced, physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, geography, and drawing will all be oriented towards giving pupils an elementary knowledge of industrial and agricultural techniques. The ultimate extent of revision remains unknown, but an even heavier emphasis upon practical work appears to be in store. Whereas in 1955 the new "labor" course took two hours per week, an experimental doubling of this allotment in 600 schools has been introduced in 1956.

4. At the same time, it has been necessary to launch an intensive propaganda campaign to overcome the "haughty and scornful" attitude of tenth-year graduates towards manual labor. Now that only a minority of them can enter universities and institutes, thousands have been discovered sitting around in the cities, hoping to be admitted next year. The slogan "From Diploma to Production!" rings jarringly in the ears of many who took for granted the fact that ten years of schooling guaranteed them freedom from manual labor, membership in the upper class, and a "cultured" life.

5. While polytechnical training is intended to adjust the school to new conditions of universality and to prepare a productive labor force, it has little relevance to the third problem, the unsatisfactory behavior of Soviet youth. Education's contribution in this area is the boarding school, unveiled by Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress early this year. Despite the initial impression given at this time, the boarding schools are not intended to be a training ground for an elite, but instead the model for all secondary schools. According to the Khrushchevian vision, they are to be spacious, located in a suburb or woodland, and fully equipped to meet the educational (including polytechnical) and social needs of Soviet children. In effect, the program calls for the state to take over virtually all the functions of child-rearing from an early age. Khrushchev's description of what teachers in this school must be carries strong overtones of parental surrogates. About 300 boarding schools were opened this year in the premises of existing schools, with priority given to children from difficult home environments. Pending further construction, the eagerness to approximate boarding schools with makeshift arrangements is evident in the organization of hostels where students can live; 6,500 pupils in Moscow Oblast<sup>1</sup> are presently accommodated in this fashion, which evidently is too rudimentary to be classified as a boarding school. At the lowest level, arrangements have been made for children to remain at school throughout the day for teacher-supervised activities.

Problems in the Reform Movement

6. In the thirties, Stalin once transformed all Soviet schools for the eighth through tenth grades into vocational technicums with a stroke

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of the pen. Compared to that, the present reforms are being introduced at a gradual pace, but either one alone would be sufficient to occupy any school system for many years. Apart from the initial confusion, a number of longer-range problems will arise. In the polytechnical field, workshop buildings, equipment, and teachers qualified for the difficult demands of this type of training must first be provided. After this, it will prove difficult to prepare young workers and university candidates on the same curriculum, which must fit the great majority for immediate employment and yet enable a minority to undertake advanced schooling. There is also the danger that polytechnical training will actually turn out to be mono-technical, with rural schools training only agricultural workers and urban ones only industrial workers, the latter sub-divided among various trades according to the equipment available in their school workshop and the specialization of the production unit which is assigned patronage over the school. The Soviets have not disclosed how they will avoid this tendency, which would defeat the avowed aims of broad basic technical familiarity and a wide range of choice of profession. Perhaps it is not regarded as a danger to be avoided.

7. Boarding schools will require an even larger investment, and a number of five-year plans will be needed to make them universal. It is possible that, as the years pass, the universal part of this scheme may be shelved like other grandiose projects, and the restricted boarding school might in fact be chosen to solve the problem of university preparation which polytechnization will aggravate. It would then turn out to be the elite training ground which Khrushchov's original remarks suggested it might be. Barring a conscious policy change, however, boarding schools will penetrate Soviet education to a considerable extent during the next five years; the 1960 target for enrollment is one million pupils.


Probable Results

8. Despite the problems it involves, polytechnization appears well adapted to the problems facing the USSR and has much in common with the response of other industrial societies to similar circumstances. It is making the curriculum considerably more appropriate to the future careers of most students. The boarding school, on the other hand, is more totalitarian in nature and embodies renewed Bolshevik dreams of a thoroughly conditioned population. Here "the educational influence of pedagogues encompasses the entire life of the child, from early childhood, when he ceases to require maternal care, to his maturity." Or again, at present "the school has insufficient means for carrying out broad educational measures, and the upbringing of children in our homes sometimes runs contrary to the demands of the school. The transfer to boarding schools will considerably change the relationship between public and home education, because the government will take upon itself the main responsibility for the care of the child." Success in remolding attitudes in this fashion is less likely than success in achieving higher productivity through

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greater technical education. But the direction of change, however slight, will probably be in the direction of more thorough indoctrination.

9. Lastly, it seems clear that the Soviet educational system, as modified by these reforms, will be even less conducive than before to the emergence of independent thought or critically-minded individuals. Secondary education has never been a seedbed of divergence in the USSR, and if evolutionary forces are to modify the Soviet system in any fundamental way, they will have their sources elsewhere. 25X1A9a



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